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THE
LONGFELLOW MEMORIAL
ASSOCIATION

1882-1922

AN HISTORICAL SKETCH
BY
WINTHROP S. SCUDDER

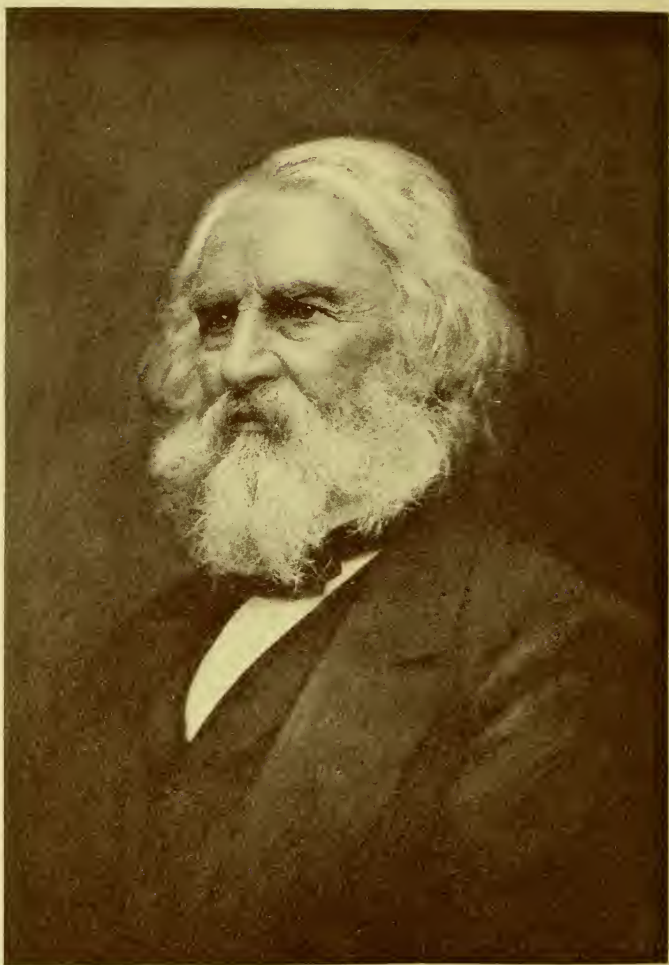


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CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
1922









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Henry W. Longfellow

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of September 3, 1922

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Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
was born in
Portland, Maine, February 27, 1807.

Died in
Cambridge, Massachusetts,
March 24, 1882.

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This copy is sent to you with
the compliments of the Longfellow
Memorial Association.

AN HISTORICAL SKETCH

BY

WINTHROP S. SCUDDER

THE LONGFELLOW MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION having accomplished its purpose, voted to dissolve at a final meeting held in 1922 at the house of its President, Dr. Charles W. Eliot. It was then decided that this fact be published, together with a short sketch of the Association and its work; and the present writer was asked by the President to prepare such a sketch.

The idea of an Association for the purpose of providing a Memorial to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was first given public expression a few days after the death of the poet, in a letter published in a Boston newspaper of March 30, 1882. Five days later, on April 4, a meeting was held to consider the formation of such an organization at the house of Arthur Gilman, 5 Waterhouse Street, Cambridge.

The following gentlemen were present:

HON. JAMES A. FOX, *Mayor*
CHARLES DEANE
EPES SARGENT DIXWELL
ARTHUR GILMAN
FRANCIS B. GILMAN
PROFESSOR ASA GRAY
REV. DR. GEORGE ZABRISKIE GRAY
REV. DR. FREDERICK H. HEDGE
HON. HENRY O. HOUGHTON
PROFESSOR J. LAURENCE LAUGHLIN
REV. DR. ALEXANDER MCKENZIE
PROFESSOR CHARLES ELIOT NORTON
HORACE E. SCUDDER
HENRY VAN BRUNT
BENJAMIN VAUGHAN
DR. HENRY P. WALCOTT
JUSTIN WINSOR
DR. MORRILL WYMAN

Five others who could not be present expressed by letter their cordial interest:

ISAAC W. DANFORTH
Professor EPHRAIM W. GURNEY
Col. THOMAS WENTWORTH HIGGINSON
Professor EBEN N. HORSFORD
Professor JAMES B. THAYER

Of these eminent men, Dr. Henry P. Walcott, is the only one who was also present at

the last meeting of the Association, when it was voted out of existence.

Other meetings were held; and the Association was incorporated May 23, 1882, and organized June 7, when it was voted that annual meetings should be held on Longfellow's birthday, February 27. The following officers were elected:

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL, *President*

CHARLES DEANE

CHARLES W. ELIOT

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS

JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER

} *Vice Presidents*

ARTHUR GILMAN, *Secretary*

JOHN BARTLETT, *Treasurer*

Mr. Lowell who was abroad accepted his office by cable.

In reading through the reports of the Secretaries through the years of the existence of the Association, one is deeply impressed with the dignity of its active membership, always limited to one hundred. It included the names of representative men in business, in literature, and in the other professions.

There have been three presidents of the Association,— James Russell Lowell, Charles

Eliot Norton, and Charles W. Eliot; two Secretaries, Arthur Gilman, unremitting in his interest till his death, and Judge Robert Walcott who has faithfully served the Association since 1909; and three treasurers, John Bartlett able to serve but one year; Benjamin Vaughan who carried the Association through the active period of its financial existence, and Edmund M. Parker who brought its affairs to a successful conclusion.

Even before the Association was organized, at one of the preliminary meetings, that of April 14, a report was read which contained the following recommendations:

“the erection under the direction of a competent committee, of a monument upon the lot of land opposite the late residence of Mr. Longfellow, including a portrait statue protected by an architectural canopy or other protection, and the laying out of the lot as a public park, to be surrendered to the City of Cambridge to be kept open forever, when the City is ready to accept the trust.”

In order to take advantage of the general and widespread interest in Longfellow the Association gave school children the opportunity to contribute each a dime, in return for which each child should receive a facsimile of a bit of Longfellow's manuscript and

a picture of his home; adults could become honorary members by subscribing one dollar, receiving an engraved certificate. From this method, unfortunately, an impression went out that large amounts were not desired, and in consequence, many persons who were ready to make larger subscriptions desisted, fearing to appear ostentatious.

Thousands of children and many adults from coast to coast subscribed; but the net result of even thousands of such small subscriptions could not produce an adequate sum. Therefore, eventually, larger subscriptions were asked for, and were received from a large number of persons widely distributed geographically.

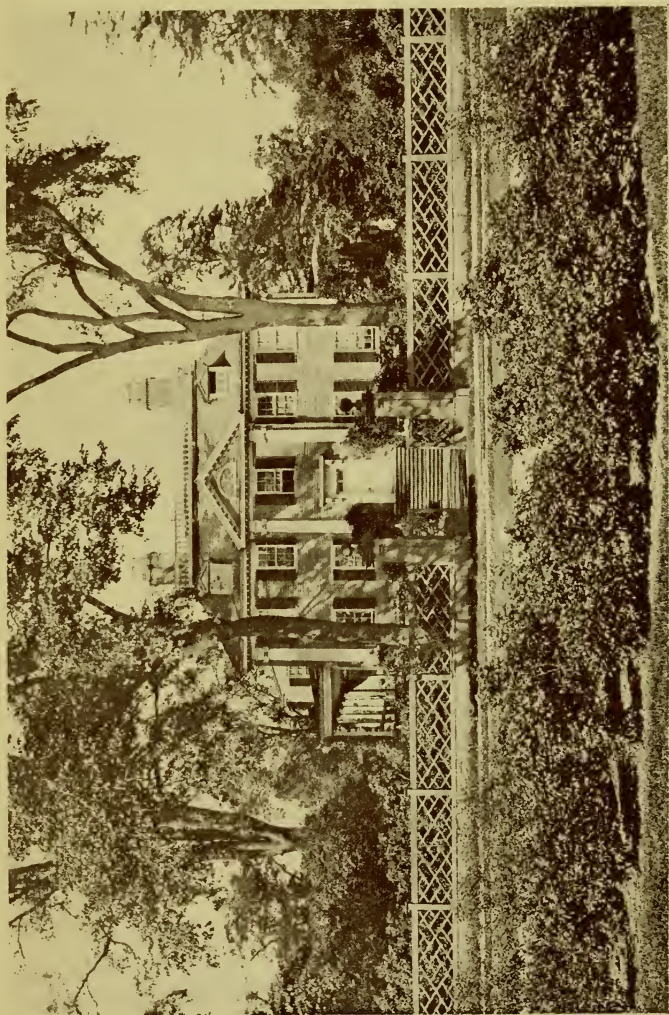
A natural expression of the general interest felt was shown by three authors' readings which brought in a considerable sum of money and gave a vivid picture of a vanished society. These were notable events. The first reading was suggested and planned by William Dean Howells in 1887; and to quote from the Secretary's report of that year was:

"made very successful by the efforts of Mrs. James T. Fields and other ladies of Boston, supplemented by the generosity of Moses Kimball,

the proprietor of the Boston Museum. The occasion was extraordinary. The Museum was crowded with persons who paid liberally for admission. Large numbers of them were unable even to get seats; and for several hours they listened breathlessly to the reading of authors who were seated as in a drawing-room on the stage, with Mrs. Howe at a table in the centre. They had generously given their services for the purpose of the Association. Those who contributed on this occasion were, in the order in which they read, Samuel L. Clemens (Mark Twain), Oliver Wendell Holmes, Edward Everett Hale, Mrs. Julia Ward Howe, Thomas Bailey Aldrich, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, William Dean Howells, George William Curtis, and James Russell Lowell."

The second reading was held in Sanders Theatre, Cambridge, on Longfellow's birthday, February 27, 1888, and was enthusiastically carried out by Charlotte Fiske Bates (Mrs. Rogé).

Francis H. Underwood, United States Consul in Glasgow, undertook the third reading in 1889. It was held in the "Queen's Rooms" of that city, and was a gathering of leaders in the social and literary world. The Lord Provost of Glasgow, Sir James King, Bart., presided, and addresses were made by Professor Jebb and others.



PAUL FROST, PHOTO

THE HOME OF LONGFELLOW



DANIEL CHESTER FRENCH. SCULPTOR



THE LONGFELLOW MEMORIAL

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The figures are:

MILES STANDISH

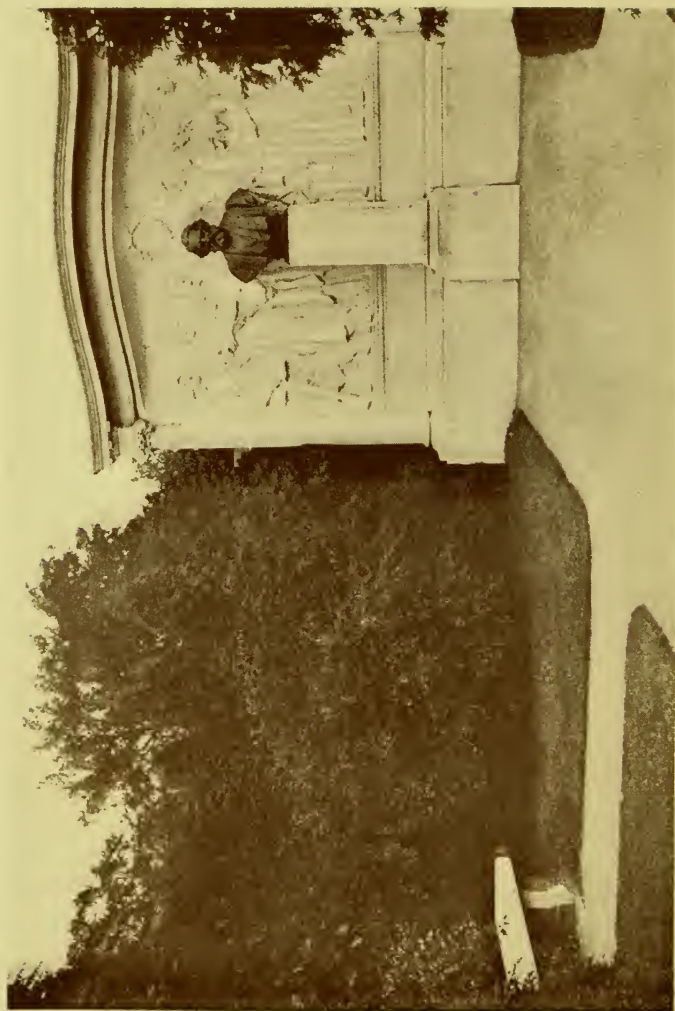
SANDALPHON

THE VILLAGE
BLACKSMITH

THE
SPANISH STUDENT

EVANGELINE

HIAWATHA



PAUL FROST, PHOTO

THE MEMORIAL AND THE SUNKEN GARDEN

Other evidence of interest was the formation of Longfellow Memorial Associations throughout the country.

After 1889, the Association was not active in raising funds. The considerable sum of money invested was left to accumulate until it was sufficient to cover the cost of a Memorial Monument; for in the words of Dr. Eliot,

"They were sure that the fame of Longfellow would endure without any local monument, and that an adequate monument would be appropriate and welcome after the lapse of a whole generation, or of many generations."

That this belief was well founded has been proved through all subsequent years, as I, a resident of the Park can testify, by the many pilgrims to the Longfellow house and Park which each day has brought and still brings. They are of all ages and of all races.

During the late war it was touching to see the reverent interest with which boys on their way to service — sailors from ships in the Harbor, and students from the Cambridge Radio School — came to gaze at the monument and house. To many of them Boston meant Longfellow, and their first excursion was to his home. One wondered in how many

of their far-away homes might still be hanging the framed certificate or the picture of the Longfellow house, testifying to that early membership.

The association was encouraged in its efforts at various times by many gifts and expressions of interest from unlooked for sources, of money and of material relating to the life and work of Longfellow.

In 1884, a generous contribution was sent from the literary men of Brazil, instigated by His Majesty, the Emperor Dom Pedro, who was a personal acquaintance and ardent admirer of Longfellow.

Also in 1884, the Association received from the Longfellow Memorial Association of London, through the Hon. Henry O. Houghton who brought them to this country, about five hundred valuable autograph letters relating to the placing in Westminster Abbey of the bust of Longfellow.

Later in 1884, two replicas of this Westminster Abbey bust were sent to America. One was given to Harvard College, and the other to the Maine Historical Society, in Portland.

In 1910, through the efforts of Professor Bliss Perry, a gift of money came from the

National Longfellow Association in Washington. This was part of the surplus subscriptions after the Monument to Longfellow in Washington had been completed.

The most encouraging of all of these unlooked for gifts was made in 1883, in the very beginning, at the first annual meeting, when the children of Longfellow presented the Association with the land for the Park, opposite the Longfellow House and reaching from Brattle Street to Mt. Auburn Street. Four years later, in 1887, they doubled their gift by adding an equal amount of land, opposite the Park, between Mt. Auburn Street and the Charles River; but this land was taken in 1894 by the City and in 1921 was made a part of the Metropolitan Park System, though without any designation to mark the source from which it came.

In offering the second gift of land to the Association on behalf of his sisters, Alice, Annie and Edith, his brother Charles and himself, Mr. Ernest W. Longfellow wrote:

"Such a breathing space on the river in connection with the playing fields of the College, which my father was so instrumental in securing, will one day be a great boon to Cambridge when it becomes

crowded, and would be a better monument to my father and more in harmony with his character than any graven image that could be erected."

The "playing fields" referred to in this prophetic letter were the seventy acres of land, on the opposite side of the river, which Longfellow, with some of his family and friends, as far back as 1870, twelve years before his death, had deeded to Harvard College. Although a considerable area of this land was taken by the Metropolitan Park Commission for the Speedway Section of the Charles River Reservation, yet the original Longfellow gift now furnishes about three-fifths of the sixty-one acres which forms Soldiers' Field, the athletic grounds of Harvard College, thus contributing to fulfill the purpose of that admirable gift to the College.

In this connection, it is appropriate to mention the latest gift for the benefit of the public made by the Longfellow family; because through it, the Association has been enabled to realize their ideal for the final memorial, an ideal quite beyond their plan at the outset, as stated in the recommendation of 1882 already quoted. When the will of Longfellow's daughter, Edith (Mrs. Richard H. Dana),

was proved in 1915, the fact was disclosed that as a further means of honoring their father, the children of Longfellow had provided for a perpetual trust of the house and grounds where he had lived.

In the deed of this remarkable gift stand these simple words:

“to be held, preserved, maintained and managed for the benefit of the public as a specimen of the best colonial architecture of the 18th century, as a historical monument of the occupation of the house by George Washington during the siege of Boston during the Revolutionary War, and as a memorial to Henry W. Longfellow.”

The trustees named are: John F. Moors, of Boston, Fellow of Harvard College; Edmund M. Parker of Cambridge, Treasurer of the Longfellow Memorial Association; and Dudley L. Pickman, Jr., of Boston. Together with the deed the trustees received from these donors a substantial sum of money, to keep the homestead in repair and pay the insurance and the taxes, if any.

These four gifts together make the memorial to the nation's best-love poet, a truly noble one. The gifts cover a period of forty-five years, from 1870 to 1915, by coincidence

just equalling the number of years Longfellow, by living in it, made the house memorable. They will keep open and unobstructed forever a stretch of land nearly three quarters of a mile in length from the Longfellow House to Brighton, comprising more than seventy-six acres, larger in area than Boston Common and the Public Garden combined.

We who love Cambridge may take satisfaction in the thought that here will be a spot in our ever-changing City that will not be changed; and that future generations may find rest and refreshment just as we do, from the sight of the fine old house among its lilacs on the one hand, and on the other, of the sweep of the Park, the Charles, and the Meadows and hills beyond.

In 1887, the Association decided to have the Park laid out. They consulted the eminent landscape architect, Charles Eliot, creator of the Boston Metropolitan Park System. He made comprehensive plans which were unanimously adopted and faithfully adhered to until the final erection of the memorial in 1914, when the landscape architect, Paul Frost, conscientiously adapted them to meet some changed conditions which then arose.

In 1907 the Park was conveyed, by the Association, to the City of Cambridge which accepted the perpetual care of it.

In 1912, the accumulated funds on hand, were sufficient to warrant the Association in making a contract for the Memorial Monument; and the Sculptor, Daniel Chester French, was asked to submit for approval, drawings, and a model for a monument.

Mr. French, in collaboration with Henry Bacon, architect, submitted with his design for the monument a plan for the reconstruction of the stone stairway and wall between the two levels of the Park built in 1889 by the architect, C. Howard Walker, this change being necessary in order to place the monument in line with the Longfellow house and the Mt. Auburn Street gate. These plans were approved by the Longfellow family and then accepted by the Association.

But it was not until two years later that the Association was to attain their object in the finished work of Art. Then on a beautiful Autumn afternoon, October 29, 1914, they assembled in the Park with members of the Longfellow family and guests of honor to take part in the unveiling ceremony of the Longfellow Memorial Monument.

The dedicatory address was made by the President of the Association, Dr. Charles W. Eliot, who said as he stood beside the monument:

“The Longfellow Memorial Association was established shortly after the death of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in 1882. It early secured this piece of land between Brattle Street and Mt. Auburn Street on which we are standing, and later the piece across Mt. Auburn Street which reaches to the Parkway and the River. In his own lifetime, Longfellow and a few friends had given to Harvard University the marshes on the opposite side of the River to be kept forever open. Thus, the beautiful prospect from the southern windows of the house where Washington made his headquarters, and Longfellow worked through many happy years, was secured in perpetuity for the enjoyment of all who pass along these two much-travelled thoroughfares, or visit yonder historic house or these memorial grounds.

Having accomplished thus much, the Association waited until the money in their hands became, by accumulation, sufficient to cover the cost of an adequate monument in stone and bronze. They were sure that the fame of Longfellow would endure without any local monument, and that an adequate monument would be appropriate and welcome after the lapse of a whole generation, or of many generations. A poet's fame shares the life of the language in which he speaks; and only the

great musical composer finds a more universal acceptance. Music, indeed, speaks a universal language.

The poet, too, is the great dispenser of fame. In the poems of Longfellow are embalmed the memories of many precious human characters, both real and imaginary, and of striking historical events—both sorrowful and glorious. The poet can confer lasting remembrance on men and things worth remembering, as either warning or example. It is the poet that best immortalizes mortals.

In teaching mankind, the poet, like the painter or the sculptor, has the advantage of putting his lessons into exquisite forms which survive because of their own intrinsic excellence and loveliness. The genius of Longfellow was always exerted in defense or furtherance of things good, pure, just, and merciful. He taught love, good will, simplicity, and candor, and courage and fortitude in support of liberty and justice. His poems depict many of the sorrows and tragedies of the individual life, and of the life of the race; but through all his writings there gleams faith in the ultimate prevailing of good over evil, joy over sorrow, and life over death.

The monument we are about to unveil is the work of an eminent Sculptor who commemorates a Poet by setting before coming generations his features in bronze, and the figures in marble of six characters made familiar to millions of readers by his verse. A commemorative purpose could

not be more appropriately or expressively executed. One fine art praises and adorns another.

I invite Priscilla Thorpe, a granddaughter of Longfellow, to unveil the monument.

Mr. Mayor, the Longfellow Memorial Association now presents this fine monument to the City of Cambridge, in full faith that the City will preserve and keep these grounds, this bust, and these marble figures as a worthy memorial of a famous man whose life-work makes Cambridge a precious place not only to those who live in it, but to millions of persons who have never set foot within its borders. The value of a city as a place to live in is determined generation after generation not only by its productive industries and its commerce, but by its churches, schools, and parks, by the memories of great and good lives lived there, and by the grateful remembrance in new generations of good influences which thence proceeded. So long as the City shall stand, Cambridge will be fairer, and dearer to mankind because Longfellow lived here."

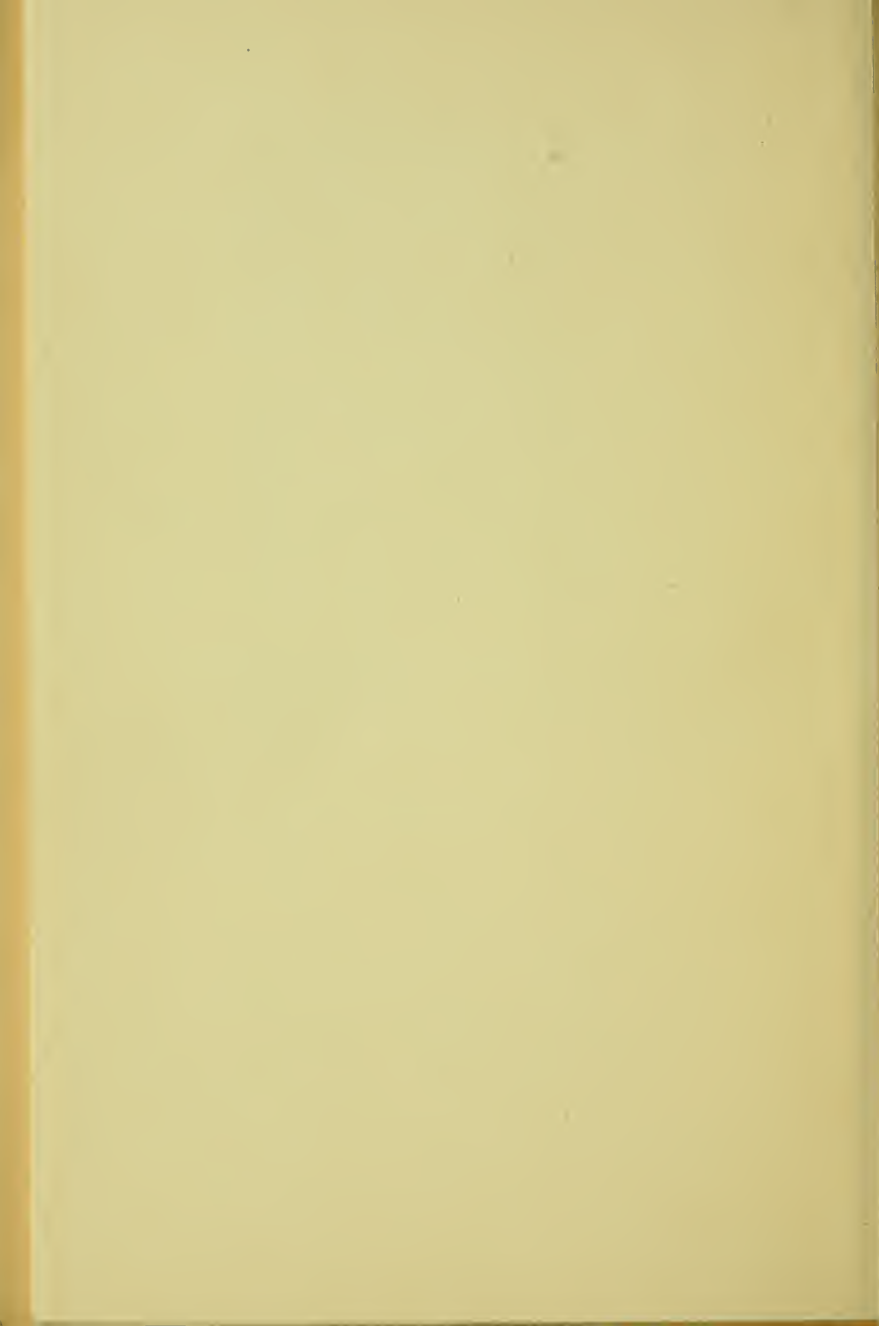
In reply, Mayor T. W. Good made a short appreciative speech of acceptance in behalf of the City.

When the covering was drawn aside a bronze portrait-bust of Longfellow was revealed. It rests on a marble pedestal, standing against a broad background of Tennessee marble fourteen feet wide and twelve feet high, built into

the terrace wall of the upper Park forming a protecting canopy slightly arched above and supported by a marble column at each end. On the face of this protecting canopy are six figures cut in relief, familiar to all readers of Longfellow — Miles Standish, Sandalphon, The Village Blacksmith, The Spanish Student, Evangeline, and Hiawatha.

The monument stands in a small green, sunken garden, fenced by a low stone coping and hedged in by tall arbor vitae trees. Three stone steps at the entrance lead down to the grassy floor of the garden where intersecting gravel walks end in stone seats on either side.

Here the visitor to the memorial may sit in peace and retirement to study its beauty, shut in from the surrounding Park and ever encroaching City.



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